Bangladeshi Learners' English Language Learning through Acculturation - Secondary Education

Nitish Kumar Mondal, M.A. (Double)

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Abstract

Acculturation is very important for the purpose of learning language in every country. As a multicultural country, Bangladesh is not beyond of this. This article presents the model of acculturation among Bangladeshi learners who are interested learning English language especially at secondary stage. The objective of the study was to evaluate the acculturation model for learning English language at secondary level education in context of Bangladesh. For the purpose of data collection, a questionnaire was prepared where the populations of the study were students of the secondary level education. Fifty four students were selected as the sample for this study. The respondents were from the different schools. The sample was selected through a random sampling method where the boys and girls were not taken equally. The total survey of the study was conducted through English language. The findings of the study showed that the secondary level learners of Bangladesh have a positive attitude towards acculturation model.

Keywords: Acculturation; English language; Learning; multicultural; Secondary education.

Introduction

Acculturation is a complex phenomenon that has been around for centuries in the area of social and behavioral sciences particularly among anthropologists and sociologists (Trimble, 2003). Trimble further states that it has recently become an important concept in explaining the experiences of new ethnic and cultural groups as they immigrated to Bangladesh a multicultural society. Acculturation is defined as "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield et.al., 1936).

It was not until the last few decades that there appeared to be a major interest in research on acculturation in psychology although in the field of anthropology, the interest in acculturation developed much earlier with indigenous peoples (Hallowell, 1955), and in sociology with immigrants (Parks, 1928). Here the acculturation and assimilation of Bangladeshi learners' attitude are discussed which developed to explain the process of acculturation and assimilation based on the experience of English language learners. Acculturation process has always been complex for non-native learns. These complexities include psychological predictions such as depression, psychological distress, social and linguistic problems like language proficiency (Lueck & Wilson, 2010). Considering these aspects, Bangladeshi learners who are involved with learning English like non-natives, are at risk for psychological and mental distress due to acculturation difficulties, therefore the purpose of this study is to examine the process of learning English language through acculturation at secondary level education in Bangladesh.

Background

Acculturation is as old as history. Acculturation is a process by which non-native learners have to face new language and modes of behavior into their personal culture in order to adapt a new environment where a non native speaker can learn a new language and culture (Miyares, 1997). It is a sociolinguistic phenomenon as well, which refers to assimilation of various cultures and languages. As English is not the mother tongue of Bangladeshi learners, they have lacked of the necessary knowledge and cultural preparation to acquire English language. This lack of knowledge disposed learners to experience a cultural shock (Lee, 1999). Rumbaut (1987) discussed that many learners who have little knowledge of English, and few transferable occupational skills have to face a number of difficulties. Non-native learners like immigrants experience a high level of psychological problems (Kessler, 1997). These difficulties are usually language barriers and maintaining traditional values that hinder acculturation (Yang, 2007). English fluency is a survival skill that is critical to cultural adjustment (Westermeyer et. al., 1989). Though different social factors of acculturation determine the way to learn English for the Bangladeshi learners, they can cope up with different cultures, like English culture where English language is involved. So, Bangladeshi learners as non-native English speakers can simply learn the target language group's acts and linguistics variation.

Literature Review

Berry and Sommerlad (1970) used patterns of acculturation among aboriginal Australians to assess levels of cultural assimilation. A five-point Likert scale measured social proximity in attitudes presented by young students between precepts of their aboriginal first cultures and the dominant European-Australian society. Attitudes individuals held toward the relative desirability of integrating into the lager society were found to be significant determinants of the level of acculturation they had attained. These findings are supported in a number of studies within the context of involuntary minority and aboriginal groups in North America (Berry, Trimble, & Olmeda, 1986). These concepts can be adapted for us in broadening current understanding of learner motivation for Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Ward and Kennedy (1994) support Berry's framework in finding that sojourners with Integrated and Assimilated acculturation attitudes

demonstrated lower levels of sociocultural difficulties than ones with Separated or Marginalized attitudes. In a study of sociocultural adjustment of New Zealand government employees on sojourn programs, Ward and Kennedy (1994) found strong patterns of association with others from the same language and cultural background related to lower levels of psychological distress, while strong association with members of the host culture correlated to a lower level of sociocultural difficulties. Ward (1999) developed a new instrument to examine the two dimensions of acculturation attitudes used by Berry. Ward (1999) supported the concept of acculturation attitudes in Berry's model, but felt the descriptive power of the model was enhanced if the two spheres of acculturation perspectives (toward home and host groups) were kept distinct. Acculturation attitudes were found to relate to a number of adjusted outcomes. To further illustrate features resulting from these outcomes, Ward's approach stressed a distinction between sociocultural adjustment, characterized by the learning of everyday operational skills within the host environment, and psychological adjustment.

Acculturation Theory

According to the acculturation theory, Second Language Accusation (SLA) is determined by the degree of social and psychological distance between the learner and the target language culture. That is, the social factors like situation, social relationship with the target language group. Psychological factors like language shock, (the learner experiences, doubt and possible confusion when using the second language) cultural shock, (the learner experiences, disorientation, stress fear, etc. as a result of differences between his own culture and that of the target language community) motivation, and ego boundaries play major role in the process of acquiring/learning of second language.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were-

1. To know Bangladeshi learners' attitude towards acculturation method especially secondary level education

2. To know the acculturation method well and

3. To evaluate the opinions of the learners through questionnaire survey towards the method/model.

Significance of the study

For decades, Bangladeshi learners, as non-natives learn English from different sources where they have to follow acculturation model. Through this research both the teachers and learners would be able to know the perfect idea about acculturation system by which they could go to the multi-dimensional sources of English like textbook, TV channels, and newspapers thoroughly, side by side they could speak transparently without hesitation and learn second language easily like non-natives English people (Whose mother tongue is not English).

Acculturation in Bangladesh

Historically, the Portuguese came to Bangladesh in 1516 in order to deal with business relation where the acculturation field was created between Bangladesh and Portuguese. From the very beginning, Portuguese tried to establish a colony to continue their business and rule over the Bangladeshi people and for this reason their norms, beliefs, culture and language were assimilated to Bengali nation (Hossain et.al., 2005). Chronologically, the French and the English came to Bangladesh and acculturated to Bangladeshi cultures and norms very minutely. In 1668, French people came to Bangladesh in order to conduct business with the people of the subcontinent where Bangladeshi people are an integral part. In the developing multilingual ways, many words, norms, behaviors and sentences and cultures entered into Bengali language (Native language of Bangladesh). Moreover, after the entry of the British into Bangladesh, they were extremely able to set up their colony in order to govern Bangladesh and the subcontinent as well. They achieved the administrative power and established their colony in the subcontinent from 1765 to 1947

and governed the Bengali people. Different cultures and ways of learning English were taught to formally and informally to the Bangladeshi people. At that time the educated or elite people were highly assimilated into English language and cultures to learn English. The British governed the subcontinent for 182 years and utilized their power, norms and culture. So, the Bangladeshi people nourished their life style with the British norms, language and cultures. Because of this, many English medium schools, colleges and universities were built up in course of time in Bangladesh which enabled the acculturation between English and Bengali. In 1800, Governor General Lord Ohelishly established Fort William College in order to teach Bengali language to the English people which was directed by the scholar principal William Carey (Hossain, et al., 2005). Carey was an English man. He translated English Bible into Bengali language which is the greater embodiment of acculturation competence.

William Carey

Henry Lui Vevian De Rowsaria was a teacher of Hindu College who tried to circulate the essence of English culture and language to the young people of the subcontinent (Kiron, 2010). At that time, the people of Hindu religion were educated very highly but the Muslims lagged behind. In this context Abdul Latif, a reformer and supporter of Muslim people, established Mohamedan Literary Society in 1863 to make Muslim people educated in English (Hossain, et al., 2005). Moreover, Dr. Mohammed Shaidullah, who was a famous linguist in the subcontinent, established "Bangio Musalman Sattio Samati" to teach English to the Muslim people (Kiron, 2010). So, acculturation was going on for

many years in Bangladesh which made the Bangladeshi people (especially secondary level learners/students) capable of learning English very smoothly.

Nature of acculturation in Bangladesh

The nature of acculturation depends on contexts or situations in any domain. International English Language Testing System (IELTS), English Language Teaching (ELT), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and British Broadcasting (BBC) provide various English learning programs which lend a helping hand to learn English in Bangladesh. The English courses included in the syllabuses (in schools, colleges, universities and different educational institutions) play a vital role here. The American Center provides English learning programs in Bangladesh in order to teach English to Bangladeshi learners. Moreover, there are so many festivals organized by the English speaking countries where Bangladeshi people communicate with the target language group of native English speakers. Many Bangladeshi universities use English as the medium of instruction. In every location of Bangladesh, English medium schools are available. From the very beginning, the syllabuses of Bangladeshi educational institutions include English language as a compulsory subject. In Bangladesh, there are more than 35 tribal groups who try their best to learn English. There are so many international programs such as ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants), CAT (The Certified Accounting Technician) in Bangladesh which demand competence in English.

Methodology

In order to know the learners' attitude towards the acculturation model, a survey was conducted using 54 students through a questionnaire. These students were from the school level. As this research is descriptive and non- experimental, the research was based on primary data through questionnaire. The questionnaire in the study was in English. These were printed and sent to the respondents by the author. The survey

evaluates their opinions. It also requests for their personal comments, both positive and negative. The results of the survey were presented in percentage figure to represent the attitudes of the learners' about this model.

Questionnaire

The Questionnaire had six questions where all the questions were structured. These questions were presented in English.

Data Analysis

Data collected were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted and presented in Figure 1. Percentage was calculated by using statistical technique for analysis and the data obtained was tabulated in term of frequency. Side by side a chart is drawn on the basis of the highest percentages through the respondents' opinion obtained through the questionnaire.

Figure 1

Questions	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. By this model English can be learnt easily?	25 46.3%	10 18.5%	5 9.3%	9 16.7%	5 9.3%
2. Is this model apt for learning?	28 51.9%	13 24.0%	4 7.4%	5 9.3%	4 7.4%
3. Is this model helpful for secondary level?	14 25.9%	26 48.0%	8 14.8%	3 5.6%	3 5.6%
4. Have students' idea to this model?	11 20.3%	7 12.9%	6 11.1%	16 29.6%	14 25.9%
5. Is this model traditional?	23 42.6%	16 29.6%	5 9.3%	6 11.1%	4 7.4%
6. Has this model negative impact on learning?	18 33.3%	16 29.6%	1 1.9%	11 20.3%	8 14.8%

Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Opinions toward the Acculturation Model (N = 54)

Findings

From the above results of Figure 1, the major findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

1. Through acculturation English can be learnt easily. 46.3% learners strongly agreed.
2. Acculturation is apt for learning. 51.9% respondents are in favor of this.
3. The acculturation model is helpful at the secondary level. But 48.0% respondents strongly disagreed with this proposal.
4. 29.9% recognized the acculturation model.
5. This model is traditional which has been represented through 42.6% respondents' answer of the questionnaire.
6. This model has no negative impact on learning which has been expressed through the answers of 33.30% respondents.

On the basis of the seven structured questions (Taking the highest percentages) a pie chart can be drawn in the following way-
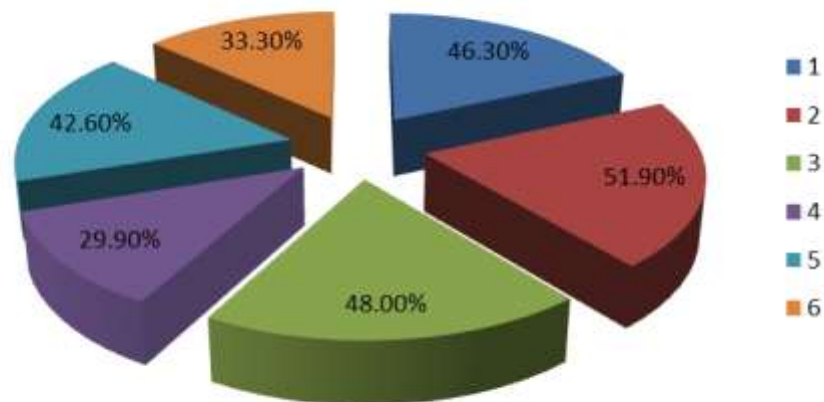

Results and discussion

Out of the 54 learners who participated in the study through questionnaire survey, 25 of them said that by this model English can be learnt easily and this model is apt for

learning, 28 learners (Students) are in favor of this opinion. 26 students said that this model is helpful for secondary level education. Moreover, students' have some knowledge of this model. Though it is a traditional model, this model has no negative impact on learning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is generally proved that acculturation is very much helpful for learning languages. There can be no denying the fact that it is a traditional model but it has no negative impact on language learning. So, without acculturation, language learning is impossible. In order to be able to write and speak a language transparently, this model must be adopted. No matter how students learn English language, they should automatically make use of their learning in their talks and this will be made possible by using the acculturation model.

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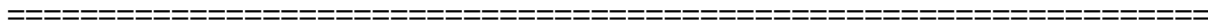
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Nitish Kumar Mondal, M.A. (Double)
English Discipline
Khulna University
Khulna-9208
Bangladesh
nitish.english@yahoo.com